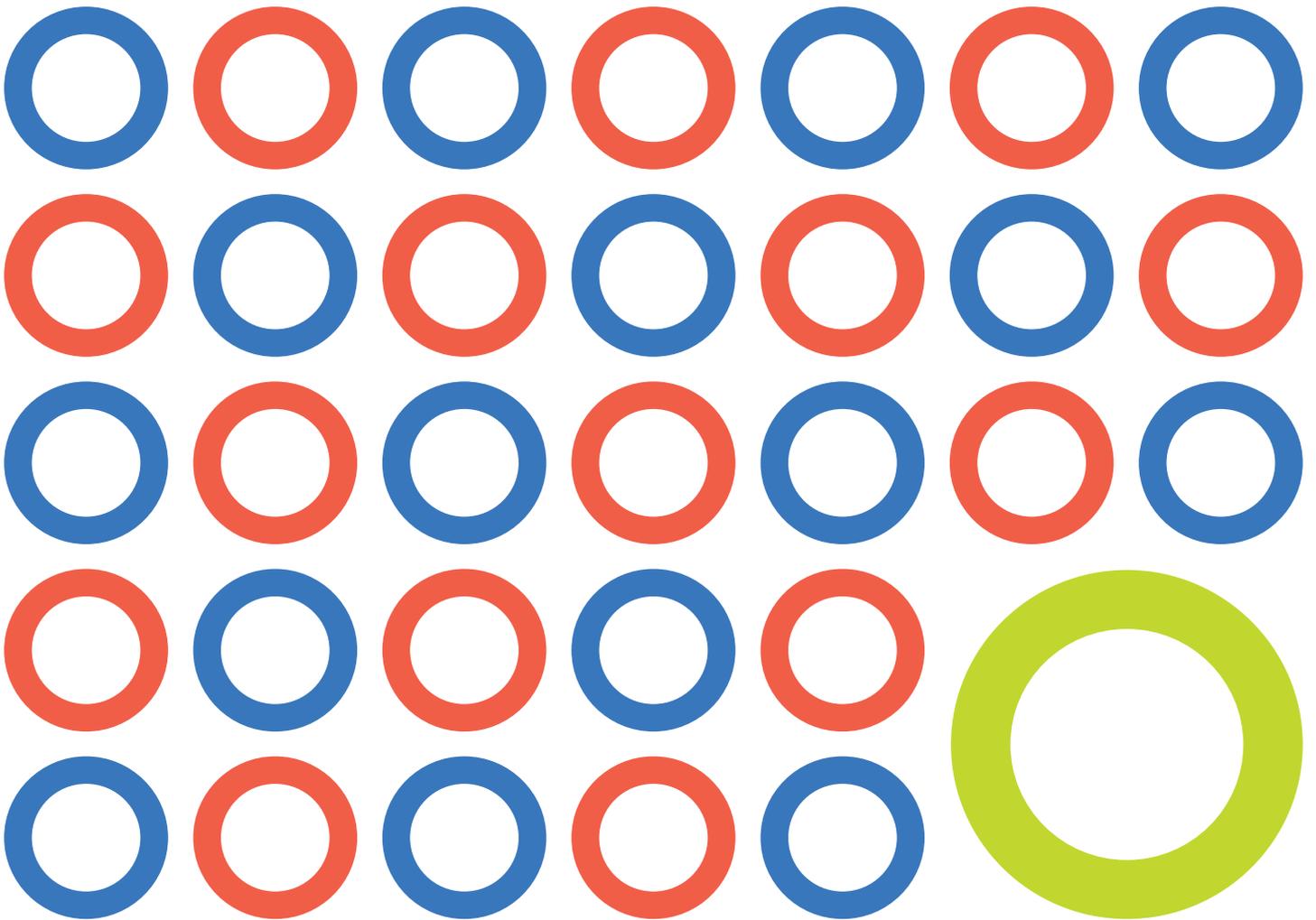


The Change Agent



oasis

School of Human Relations

This manual is based on research conducted at the Oasis
School of Human Relations, originally authored by Bryce Taylor.

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Introduction

Change Agent/Consultant

The terms *change agent* and *consultant* are used interchangeably in this manual because there is such similarity between the two roles. The change agent is someone who may not have the title consultant, but is someone who is committed to change, such as a project leader or manager. The consultant has status and an explicit title and is usually employed by an organisation for their expertise as a contributor to a major process of change, and/or they are hired because they are an outsider; the change agent may be from within the organisation or from outside. Taking these differences into account, the work of each is very similar. Both need:

- To understand the dynamics of organisations, both small and large
- To understand the dynamics of groups of teams
- To know a good deal about the management of interpersonal issues, especially conflict and difference
- To have a fair grasp of their own emotional competence.

Perhaps the major difference between a change agent and a consultant is in some measure related to the scope of ambition and attachment to status. Many change agents are every bit as competent and sophisticated as their colleagues who describe themselves as consultants, usually, however, change agents are not paid so highly and tend to work with social and cultural organisations rather than economic want.

There is also the term *management consultant*, but for our purposes this is an entirely different occupation. Their role usually entails:

- A technical organisational brief
- Making organisational diagnosis
- Putting forward a range of recommendations: the client is then left to act upon their findings and recommendations – or not.

This manual refers to change agents and consultants working with organisational development from a human relations perspective. (There are other perspectives, such as a socio-technical systems approach.)

The Work of the Change Agent/Organisational Consultant/Project Manager

There are many people who have a role in changing organisations, who would not at first think of themselves as change agents. There are those who:

- Have a **communication** role across an organisation
- Have a **welfare** or support function
- *May lead project teams* to generate new organisational initiatives
- Have a developmental role
- Are **designated change agents** and consultants who know, and others know, it is their work to help the organisation change.

The aim of this manual is to meet an increasing need for a framework that brings together the key elements of the work of the change agent alongside a developmental view of the organisation and its people. It is aimed at benefiting those who:

- Have a clear change agent/consultant position
- Are thinking of developing such a role
- Have a need to better understand how to help others and the organisations in which they work develop more effectively.

A Developmental Perspective

The work of a change agent is often done alone, which often makes it challenging and deeply questioning. There are few signs of success that are clearly the result of your work – this makes the role of the change agent one of particular difficulty. *Preparation for the work is therefore vital.* The change agent works out of themselves and their own resources – unless they simply arrive with a stock solution to whatever problem the organisation is demonstrating. This manual is based upon a developmental perspective and recognises these factors.

A crude approach to **organisational change** may produce some quick effects but is unlikely to make a lasting (positive) impact. A developmental approach recognises firstly where people are, where the organisation is and what options arise, which then suggest the range of potential change that is possible. Whilst it is apparently slower, it is an approach that directly involves those who have to live in the change.

It also recognises that those who do not want to see the changes arrive will have an opportunity to recognise the challenges ahead and begin to make their own plans for what they might do. No organisation can expect everyone to want to make changes, just as individuals can no longer expect the organisation to look after them for life. It is the abandonment of just these kinds of past assumptions that has made organisational change such a growing activity.

Changing Organisations

In this manual the terms ‘change’ and ‘development’ are used interchangeably for convenience, as they are by most people generally. However, there is a critical difference between the two which anyone involved in any organisational work needs to grasp at the outset. The differences are examined in *Section II: Organisational Development*.

Changing organisations is a nicely ambiguous beginning: organisations change anyway – by adaptation, modification, adjustment. Changing organisations is increasingly a conscious activity and there is a growing literature about how to change organisations, but organisations, as those who have been involved know only too well, are not easy to change – not in any significant way. They resist change; they often oppose innovation.

Changing organisations is about helping the people in them change. In the end, the organisation is, in large part, the sum of the people within it. Help those to change and the organisation will change. But that too is not the whole story. Very often helping people make changes to the way the organisation works involves helping them to **understand** more about how the organisation works.

Few of those of us working in organisations have been given much of an understanding of how they operate, as opposed to being able to read the organisational chart. It thus makes it more difficult to empower people to respond to situations if they are handicapped by a lack of understanding of the situation in which they are placed. Much organisational development work is, therefore, about raising people’s awareness of their circumstances; the influences upon them; the options that are before them; the choices they may be able to make and the action they could undertake.

Each one of those processes requires a complex blend of understanding, skill and description to help things make sense to those involved without either being patronising or overly complex.

Organisational change is a complex process because it involves the people, their roles, their structures, environmental factors and other influences that are acting upon the total organisational 'field'. Yet unless organisations change and learn how to manage existing in **continuous change**, they will not have much of a future in the rapidly changing world that we have entered.

Whether as a result of technological innovation, shifts in production to other countries, the application of new processes to work practices, the changing patterns of consumers or customers, all organisations acknowledge that they are in a time of great turbulence. We have moved from a time when the theme was managing change, beyond managing uncertainty to one of **managing in chaos**.

Themes and Areas of Development

The manual is designed to introduce some of the critical models and methods of assisting organisational changes in a developmental way to those who have an interest and a commitment to working in organisations and to those they find there.

It examines the process of consultancy/change through the Seven Stage Model of Human Relations.
It puts the work of the consultant in the context of current organisational dynamics and social change.

It is designed to enable readers to take up or develop their existing role with a greater confidence and clarity about the nature of change interventions in organisations and the dynamics of those who have to live through such changes. The manual covers:

- Ways of understanding organisations
- Development and organisations, and organisational development
- Frameworks for assessing interventions and their likely effects
- Individuals, roles, groups, teams – the organisation: how to better understand and assess them
- Authority, power, leadership and direction: some organisational myths and fantasies
- Structure, processes and the place for values
- How to go about developing the individual, the group, the team, the organisation
- Developing an assignment brief
- The consultant-client relationship: what it is and is not
- The internal states needed for change agents to remain engaged but not over-involved in the outcome of their efforts
- Managing the process: theirs and your own
- What it takes when it gets tough: reflection, development, personal support
- Review and evaluation: the work, the people, the assignment.

The manual contains many opportunities for practical involvement by the reader, which reflects the experiential approach inherent in the developmental education perspective inherent in human relations. In this model the change agent/consultant is not someone who watches from afar and makes distant pronouncements. Consultants have to work with the themes that others are living; to design strategies and outline potential approaches for their clients to assess and make decisions about. Whilst it is important to have the underlying rationale clear, it is more important that the consultant can speak to the client's 'felt sense' of things. Entering the world of the client, however, is not for therapeutic purposes; it is to enable both client and consultant to move forward in the development process. This combination of understanding of the other and the needs of the situation create a demand for immediacy and responsiveness.

Section I: Organisations in the 21st Century

1: The Ten Features of the Coming Organisational Revolution

A summary drawn from John Heron, Bill Torbert, Charles Handy and Bob Garratt

“Doctrines of human rights are marching inexorably forward, advancing from the political to the economic arena: in particular, the doctrine that every human being has a right to participate in decisions that affect his or her needs, interests, and activities.

This right for workers to participate in managerial decision-making is reinforced by a right for increased self-determination at the site of work. And this in turn is enhanced by the spread of educational and psychological values of personal fulfilment and expression.

At the same time there is a pronounced tendency in the modern world toward large organisations. If these become monolithic, hierarchical bureaucracies, then three interrelated problems set in:

- Unmanageable complexity
- Relative inefficiency
- Human alienation among staff.

The organisational revolution stems from the need for manageable complexity and for efficiency, as well as from needs for participation, self-determination and self-realisation for persons at work.” John Heron, *The Complete Facilitator’s Handbook*, HPRP, Guildford Surrey, 1977.

This is increasingly becoming more feasible, informed by rapid advances in automation, computers, artificial intelligence and the whole range of new information and communications technology. Some features of the organisational revolution include:

- 1. Democratic representation:** increasing numbers of employees have formal representation at board level, and so participate democratically in central decision-making.
- 2. Autonomous work groups:** employees are becoming organised into smaller self-managing, peer supervision groups organising their own work and quality control.
- 3. Co-ownership and co-management:** the traditional distinction between owner, manager and worker is starting to break down. Workers and managers are becoming co-owners with other shareholders. Management is diversified and its functions shared by all staff in different ways and at different levels. The extreme of this tendency is the full-blown co-operative whose workers are the primary shareholders and who hire their managers on contract.
- 4. Consent cultures:** organisations are increasingly recognising the requirement to inform, confer with and consult their staff, rather than control them – and that this works better than the command and control style ways of operating from the past.

Many organisations find a marked degree of ambivalence about consent cultures. On the one hand, they recognise that involving people in the decisions that affect them makes it more likely that they will ‘own’ the consequences. On the other, more empowered people means more awkward questions being asked. More awkward questions means those leaders who rely upon manipulation, bullying or power plays are under notice that their days are numbered. The disruption that a change of ‘culture’ brings about is almost a life and death matter – at least for a time – in most organisations. Culture change is not simply a matter of rewriting the mission statement into more liberal and politically correct jargon.

- 5. Flexible management:** the effective manager is one who can move awarely and appropriately between the three modes of making decisions:
 - Making decisions *for* people
 - Making decisions *with* people
 - Delegating decision-making *to* people.

The analogy is sometimes made that the manager moves from the position of the 'star' player to the 'team coach'. The star player is the one who gets all the attention and is often pandered to for their momentary outbursts of creative genius. They are notoriously difficult to influence or give feedback to.

The team coach is less interested in their own standing and attention-seeking than in ensuring that what needs to be done gets done. They may well not make decisions but have confidence in those who do. They exchange power for influence and share decision-making as widely as possible in an effort to empower others.

- 6. Project teamwork:** management shifts from a classical unity of command at the upper reaches of a hierarchical pyramid, to project teams of specialists. These teams are co-operative and horizontally structured with overlapping and variable functions, and last only as long as the task requires.

'Adhocracies', as they are sometimes known, mean a blurring of lines of responsibility and status and help break down traditional departmental structures. This has a secondary effect of undermining traditional departmental rivalries and encouraging staff to view themselves as members of a 'working community'.

- 7. The 'learning organisation':** much has been made of this term and for some it is no more than a 'flavour of the month' enthusiasm. However, it points to something deeper that is at work in all organisations that have any interest in developing a place for themselves in the future. Organisations need to see themselves as 'learning systems', in which human resource development is continuously applied within them to make them self-transforming.

They need to evolve effective mechanisms for harvesting learning (not simply know-how about the product, or sales and so on, but about 'process') and ensure it is distributed effectively too. For many organisations, this suggests the introduction of a level of reflection that is little short of terrifying. Organisations are not noted for their interest in working out how they got to be where they are but are more concerned with where they are going to be in the future. However, as the pace of change quickens the need to choose where you are going wisely will increase.

- 8. The shift from wages to fees:** 'outsourcing', 'freelance working' and 'portfolio careers' are all terms that indicate a shift that is increasingly prevalent. But whatever term is used it means paying people fees for work done independently to a certain standard, rather than paying wages for time spent under managerial control. Work becomes 'professionalised'.

Home-working, flexi-hours and so on have an upside and a downside: many workers who embraced the idea of becoming independent freelancers are shocked at the level of maintenance that it costs to sustain a freelance life.

- 9. Contracting and networking:** this is the corollary of the above. Legal firms in Leeds get their typing done in the Philippines! GE Capital (the world's largest finance operation and a subsidiary of GE) has call centres operating across the world's time zones. It is cheaper that way!

The large organisation contracts-out much of its work to a network of independent professionals – individuals and teams. Individual freelancers have to spend time (and therefore money) keeping their contacts up to date, and on maintenance that is required to ensure the work continues to flow.

- 10. Federalism and devolution:** the move to federalism and devolution has an internal and external aspect. Internally, large organisations shift to the federal model, with a central secretariat serving and supporting a network of many small human-sized and semi-autonomous enterprises.

Externally, organisations are increasingly looking for 'partnerships' to share costs, equipment, development time and so on. Sometimes this may be no more than cartel-forming. It all points, however, to the recognition that some developments are simply too costly for competitors to fight against one another for the prize of getting there first and that they are also too costly for one organisation to bear alone.

2: Contemporary Organisations

Features of Organisations

There are some near universal features that all organisations must share to a significant degree if they are to become organisations rather than associations, groups or clubs. (Many clubs become organisations when they achieve such a degree of complexity and sophistication in their affairs that formal procedure and rules govern not only who is represented but also how the management of the club is conducted.) An organisation that hopes to be successful has:

1. The need for people to share common aims.
2. The need to recognise that most of its work needs to be focused outside itself – meeting the needs of others (customers, or service users).
3. To recognise that it is through meeting such needs that it gains its legitimacy, rather than through profit. Profit may be necessary for survival, growth and development, but is unlikely to provide a sound or healthy basis upon which an organisation may thrive in order to serve those around it well.

Organisational Composition

The four crucial elements of an organisation that must be considered individually and in conjunction with the others are:

1. **Structure:** how the parts are connected together and in what way.
2. **Resources:** what it requires in order to accomplish its task (including people as well as material).
3. **Processes and procedures** that facilitate the work being done.
4. **Relationships:** the importance of role-clarity and the relationship of the organisation to its stake-holders – those who matter (for whatever reason) to the future health of the organisation.

It is important that there is some attempt to balance all these areas. And since no organisation is static, the progress of an organisation will require it to adapt and modify its stance to these elements over time. However, left to themselves these elements can become so at odds with one another, or with the overall aim of the organisation itself that 'difficulties' can easily turn into major problems.

Reflection and setting aside time to prioritise in relation to real timescales, rather than short-term demands, helps an organisation generate an underlying sense of rhythm that can combat some of the upheaval and drama that many organisations experience at the present time. Priorities also need to be considered alongside the implications of the choices to be made. This is an important aspect of any organisation developing a sense of its strategy i.e. its approach towards how it will ensure its future viability and success.

Organisations do not follow predictable biological or social stages of development. They are not like people in the strict sense that they have predictable phases of development that take place at predictable points in their lifetime. One key difference between a biological perspective that uses the stages of human life as a point of comparison is that there is no necessary end to the life of an organisation. A further difference is that it can become absorbed within another organisation, taken over or transformed, in ways that are unlike the fate of human beings. Having said that, organisations do share some of the features of biological systems and there are useful points of comparison and illumination from such a perspective. For example they:

1. Are born.
2. Import energy.
3. Transform this energy to produce an output.
4. Are differentiated and functionally specialised.

Organisations are made up of 'bits'. These 'bits' may have been planned and thought out carefully; they may have evolved over time; they may be coherent and make sense of the current realities of the organisation, or they may be outdated and contribute to the difficulties the organisation faces. Organisations rarely develop in any organic or rhythmic way; 'development', such as it is, is often erratic, haphazard and without great foresight into the future. Priorities get lost in the immediate situation and long-term ambitions become platitudes that may still be repeated, but rarely are they the measure of current activity.

'Organisational development' may be too a grand term for the work of many consultants or many of their assignments, more frequently the consultant is working with one part of the system, or a group within a larger unit. Occasionally he or she may be working with all the staff, or the senior management, or even the Executive team and the CEO, but whole organisation intervention, or organisation-wide change programmes, are relatively rare.

They are becoming less so, especially in small high-tech organisations, partly because interdependent working amongst multi-professional groups often means that change in one area has knock-on effects elsewhere in the system. One of the special problems of contemporary organisational life is that many organisations have set up 'teams' or 'units' – project-based initiatives – which are often unclear in their relationship to the wider organisation's overall purpose. Sometimes they are unclear about what they are to do, or how to define success. A new initiative can be attractive in the beginning, when the promise is all, but tough to survive in when the work is not going according to someone's expectations and there is no way of countering the claims that 'you should have done more'.

Working with such units is demanding because the interaction between the unit and the wider organisation is often a key to the potential for enabling both parties to benefit. The consultant may not be given access to those parts outside the unit. The result may be that the unit now knows more clearly what it is about, and even how to get there, but the organisation itself is still unconvinced.

The Problem of Ownership

There is frequently a problem of 'ownership' about projects, units or teams in organisations. Those who establish activities often cannot foresee the kinds of managerial and support systems that will be required for people entering into new areas of activity. At best, they establish a managerial or supervisory role.

Very often the people who contribute to such management teams are themselves unclear of the potential of any project, or even where it may fit into an overall policy for the organisation as a whole. As a result, there is a very marked question of lack of ownership. At such a stage, people in initiatives often feel that they are abandoned; that they are not 'owned'. They are not even 'adopted' by the agency that established them, or the group that manages them.

They often sit about waiting for someone to tell them what they should be doing; for someone to even question what they are doing. Sometimes they hope that sooner or later someone will come along and recognise all the real efforts and anxieties such pioneering work entails. Rarely does this happen.

It is not so much a question of managers not wanting to own the project, the team or the initiative, it may well be that they do not know what it would mean to take a realistic level of responsibility for a project and its staff. Staff themselves do not always want to be 'owned' and don't always know or agree about the wish to 'be owned' at all. A vacuum opens up in which project staff spend their time in great endeavour, in great seriousness, often unsure of the results they obtain and the significance of what they do. They wait with great uncertainty for someone to come along to judge the quality of their work, expecting it to be expressed in a detrimental or punitive way.

Frequently this is the end result, since those involved in the project are not pro-active enough to stimulate their own monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, or to feed the results of the activities back into the system to which they belong. In the end, the system itself starts to react to the fact that a project has been in progress for some unspecified time and no one is clear any longer about what it is doing. 'Ownership' in such circumstances feels much like being brought 'back into line'.

These are the almost inevitable consequences of much project work. They are not deliberate. They could often be remedied quite easily but, very often, the people who establish new projects and new initiatives are unaware that these are the likely consequences of what they set in motion.

Project managers, project leaders, and those involved in such activities, need to understand that they have a far more proactive potential role for feeding back information about what they are doing than they ever give themselves credit for and, rather than waiting to be 'owned', they can claim the 'right to be owned'. Of course by doing so, they lose some of their precious autonomy and freedom of action. The plea for ownership often hides behind it the advantage of having been able to do what one wanted for far too long.

The Importance of Reflection

Frequently, the failure of initiatives, projects and innovation is the failure to learn that too little time is spent actually reflecting on what is being learned, and practically no time is spent in teaching others or disseminating what has been learned in a way that enables them to make more effective decisions about such things in the future. The quality issue may only be a disguise to make organisations start to have to be accountable for their activities, their strategies and their policies. We are moving away from a situation in which change has been thought of as incremental experience, where one change may be succeeded by another, but taking place against a background of a stable state of affairs to which, one day, we will all return.

We are moving to a recognition that we are living in chaos. Instability and unpredictability will become permanent features of our response. In the past, change was not understood in this way.

3: Strategic Development

An interest in *strategic development* comes about when those responsible for the organisation have developed a certain level of consciousness.

A strategy, to be worth the name, indicates a certain level of awareness on the part of those who put it together that ensures the organisation does not simply react to events. It is not a form of hope (though many business plans are), but a planned activity that attempts to assess the significant influences acting upon the organisation and to assign them some priority in the allocation of effort and resources. An effective strategy requires three things. It must be:

1. **Clear:** in the rationale it provides, the tasks it outlines, and the priorities it sets forward.
2. **Direct:** in its call to those it is inviting to become involved.
3. **Ambitious:** if it is to raise effort and endeavour beyond that which would take place in any event.

A successful strategy does not have to be 'right' (whatever that might mean), but it does have to be useful. It has to enable those who are taking ownership of it to make better sense of their efforts and guide their contribution. It has to give them some guidance for measuring the success or otherwise of their efforts. A strategy will consider:

- The external influences (so far as they are known)
- The internal issues (so far as they are acknowledged)
- The factors over which those in charge of the enterprise have little or no influence.

It represents an attempt to predict the likely effects of what happens upon the organisation.

Understanding What You Do

It is not easy to design a policy to meet the shifting circumstances facing most organisations, even in the short-term. Nevertheless a strategy has to be found to manage existing provision, to begin to look at how to 'manage the future' and to respond to the 'quality' question. The strategy must be based upon the fundamental question, 'What business are we in?' Having a common understanding throughout the organisation of the purpose for the organisation's existence is crucial. *Setting realistic targets means having modest goals.*

There is a difference, for example, between a telephone counselling service and a counselling service that happens to use telephones at present. In the immediate term it does not affect what you do with the client in front of you, but it affects what you learn about what you do, and it affects to what use you put that learning, because how you come to think about what you are doing then goes on to influence what you notice and, in turn, what you learn.

When you work with materials you can only work within the capabilities that the materials themselves have. You cannot make a tractor out of a saloon car assembly line! The process can only lead to one result. Indeed, it is designed to achieve only one result. When you have no materials you are left with a process, a process that could lead you anywhere, unless you impose some structure and limits upon it. So you had better know what they are, *or the process will lead you and you will get lost.*

When working with human beings, switching concepts about what you are doing, being willing to move targets and being willing to change as you go along are all essential. It is called being 'flexible' and 'responsive'. However, in an organisation it can lead to chaos: a kind of chaos you do not want, because you quickly reach a stage where there are so many ways of doing things without any clear authority that it is difficult to work out what is happening, or why. If there is no consistency and you change your activities without reference to any guiding principles you cannot know much about where you are.

The mechanical way of thinking that led to the industrial assembly line leads only to one place. That is precisely its strength. You do not wait at the end of the assembly line and wonder what will come off it. You simply wait to see if it is 'good enough'. For a long time we have searched to produce that kind of predictability in human affairs, but human beings are much more splendid than motor cars. Human beings see possibilities in what is happening to them and they seek to influence, or shift, what is happening to them in ways that are unpredictable and have nothing to do with what was in the minds of those who designed the 'system'.

People in human service organisations make a reality of their own out of the processes that are laid down for them to follow. You can't make helping people, for example, as predictable and linear as an assembly line in a manufacturing plant. There are just too many variables. We might try and design some predictability into our activities to produce better systems of accountability, but improvement is one thing and the elimination of the unpredictable in service response organisations is not a feasible or even a desirable goal.

The Consequences of Past Strategies

Resources have tended to be added onto existing work, as policy makers recognise a new need. Often this leads to funding for the future being used to reinforce financially insecure activities in the present. Reduced funding, for example, forces a redefining of future activity. We have to sit down and ask ourselves:

- What is the central business we are now in?
- Will it then be different from the needs we were set up to meet?
- How should we decide?
- Who should we consult?
- Where does authority lie?

Perhaps most important of all these questions is the deceptively simple one:

- How did we get here?

Its importance lies in the fact that it is so obvious. Yet underneath the simple narrative of, 'Well we did this, then we did that, and then we got a chance to...' and so on is a line of continuity and the expression of an impulse that will show you all the motives, not just those you like to proclaim. It will demonstrate the 'done policy', what you did, and it will tell you what you were about.

Strategic Planning

This is a very intuitive and unpredictable activity. It seems that what makes one organisation more successful than another isn't how well developed the strategy is, but how quickly the strategy is capable of being developed/amended/modified in relation to what happens. In effect this means that:

Those developing the strategy don't mistake the strategy for reality and insist things have to be a certain way, especially in the light of sudden and unexpected shifts. The danger is 'but it says in the plan that...' when the reality is clearly at odds with the plan.

The strategy needs to be recognised as a best guess and that we could all do better if... Strategies are always capable of improvement in the light of events and retrospective strategy making is one sure way of proving yourself to be right. You just wait until all the data is in and then explain how come you got to be where you are. However, this only provides a justification, not a guide to action. A strategy is generated under a time limit and extends to cover only a limited period. It is a working document not a creed to be worshipped.

A strategy is not a blueprint, but a reminder to remember where we all said we were heading. The value of the strategy is the process of getting the information together, of having the discussion that forces awareness. It helps create the need for decisions to be made about competing priorities and therefore of guiding the organisational effort in a concerted fashion in a given direction. The outcome may be very different from the strategy – especially if you operate in a very volatile or shifting environment. That doesn’t mean the strategy was poor or that it was ‘wrong’.

Most strategies need to be worked at and revised because (like so many things) it is the practice that matters and not the result. Learning to think strategically is perhaps the most underdeveloped process in most SMEs.

Having a strategy and being able to change it is part of what makes some organisations sloppy and unfocused, and others dynamic and creative. Many organisations make up their strategy as a way of explaining why they got to where they were – an important task but not a strategic one.

The Four Areas of Attention

All four areas inter-relate and interact. Starting anywhere should lead to a check on the remaining areas to ensure there is a ‘fit’ between:

1. What we are doing: **Core process.**
2. How we are doing it: **Values.**
3. Who and what with: **Resources.**
4. In the light of the mission we are here to fulfil: **Mission.**

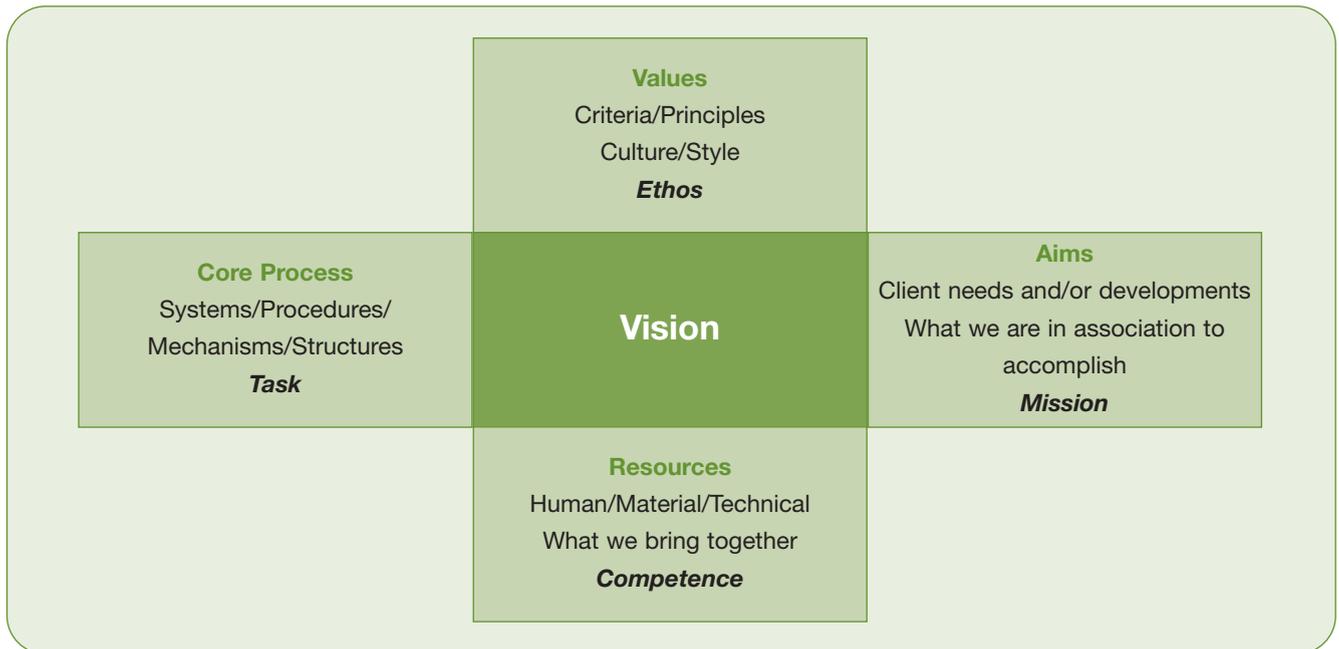


Figure 1: The Four Areas of Attention

4: Teams, Groups and Projects in Organisations

A Team

A team is small number of people with competence and skills, who are committed to a common purpose, a set of performance goals and an approach for which they hold themselves mutually committed.

Teams have certain attributes:

- There is a common purpose: related to core process
- When the task is done, the team ends; if the task is changed, the team is reviewed
- Everyone is a leader.

Project Groups

Project groups are formed out of people brought together to develop or deliver a specific organisational contribution, or to meet an organisational priority. Project groups may develop many of the characteristics of a team and may even function much like one, but they are not required to evolve to such a level of inter-dependence and they are unlikely to be remaining together for the length of time that requires it.

Some form of development may be useful in helping them gel together, but it may well fall short of team building. They need:

- Enough confidence to know that they have what they need
- The know-how to relate to one another sufficiently to be able to get on with it
- Some key individual to whom they can relate to enable them to resolve any unforeseen difficulties that may arise.

This may well be sufficient. Two of the influences upon the evolution of the project team have been the rapid changes in the environment and changing technology that is being introduced into organisations.

Effective project groups have:

- Loyalty to organisation, healthy social structures
- Shared values
- Acknowledgement of expertise
- Freedom within clear limits
- Identification with organisation
- Clear sanctions
- Been built around the skill levels of individuals
- The necessary range and levels of skills present in the group.

Aspects of work groups to consider:

- Content: task or work
- Process: quality of interaction, relationships
- What are the aims of the group?
- What are the criteria for membership?

- Review and evaluation need to be a planned part of the work
- Silence needs to be seen as valuable
- Minute-taking is not useful; shared notes can help keep people up-dated
- A work group does not need to act like a committee
- Sensing the mood and formulating it is more useful than formal voting
- The decision to 'wait until' is not necessarily 'putting off' or 'parking'
- Inter-relatedness of teams to other parts of the organisation
- Middle management is not a blanket to smother you or put out your fires
- Continuous development towards increased responsibility
- Greater flexibility needs to be aimed for
- How to get more from less is the art; if you put in the effort, it works
- Conflict resolution is not team development
- Team development requires investment, time, money.

In the workplace of the future most people could undertake most aspects of most roles to one degree or another (this is the principle of inter-changeability). In other words, competence will be high across roles and tasks in organisations. There will be a corresponding need for less hierarchy; flatter structures will mean that differences will not be so great between functions and those fulfilling them. The relative positions of individuals will therefore be related to choice, life stage, and personal circumstance – a drastic re-organisation of the social system (this is an emergent role). This will require new kinds of organisational members: change agents; people employed to consider the health and maintenance of staff and human relations specialists. All one way or another can be seen as:

- **System-developers:** people who are asking the questions that the organisation will have to live with when change and development are taking place
- **Inter-personal, human relations specialists:** people who know *how* to ask questions in a form that enhances human relations.

5: A Way of Understanding Organisations

In order to understand organisations, their life, their culture and how they function it is useful to identify the following areas. Examining each in turn and in conjunction with others will enhance clarity and awareness of the effectiveness, needs and the way forward for the organisation.

- The structure within which the work takes place
- The management arrangements that are likely to be operating
- The roles and responsibilities of those involved and the range of different professional groups combined together
- The actual work itself
- The funding arrangements within which the work is conducted
- The inter-relationship of all those elements and parties involved.

All these are undergoing substantial and continuing change in our current social conditions.

Organisations as a 'Living Being'

Making a comparison with the human being – body, soul and spirit – is a useful metaphor with which most people can identify.

Physical

- Buildings: hardware, capital i.e. money, and spiritual capital i.e. people. What is there when everyone has gone?
- Life forces: available funds, in plants, all that moves
- Processes: which is the core process?
- The need to meet the needs of those you respond to
- Information flows: decision-making, money, cash flow
- Procedures and regulations: the flow
- Time management: how it is used, actual priorities, basic values come to expression and are a consequence of what is, rather than what we would like it to be.

Soul

- Relationships and their quality: ways of working together and other arrangements; hierarchy or not; games, openness and secrecy
- Stakeholders: who are they and what part do they play?
- Role clarity: the more flexible roles become the more the work is required to be clear.

The Self or Spirit

- Expresses itself in the structure, systems, biography of the organisation's footsteps
- Are individuals committed to the values for the future?
- The shadow and the secret life: the dreams and ideals and what they have been made into.

Together

- How do they all relate: what is the gestalt – health and illness?
- Not from ill to normal but normal to healthy
- How careful is the organisation to examine itself?
- How does it go about it and who does it involve?
- Is there a process to develop its own process to investigate its own life, or is it seen as 'navel-gazing'?

Uncovering Frameworks

The following questions can all help in 'reading' an organisation:

1. What is the organisation created to do?

What type of organisation is it and how similar or dissimilar is it from others?

2. Who does the organisation serve?

Looking at the needs it meets and working back from that.

3. What is the organisational stage of development?

Recognising there are phases and each one has characteristics that are useful for guiding and influencing what is possible and practical.

4. Where does the organisation fit?

Where does it fit in relation to other or larger units of which it forms a part? This helps uncover something of the organisation's capacity to act independently or may help explain its continual dilemma about finding a direction or responding to key themes.

5. What's the organisational story?

This looks at the organisation as living out a history and useful understanding can be drawn from it.

6. Where is the organisation placed in relation to its competitors and supporters?

This helps create a picture of its relative strength or weakness amongst the field of activity in which it participates.

7. What is the organisation's structure?

This looks at the forces that are at play within the organisation and which have to be taken into account in any process of change.

8. What is happening to the environment in which the organisation exists?

This opens up the range of questions about the relative security of the organisation in relation to a wider field of players.

9. How is the organisation placed in relation to technological innovation relevant to its own field of activity?

This uncovers information about the changes that are subject to all players in an industry.

10. How is the organisation placed in its locality?

This starts to uncover knowledge about the organisation's spread of interests, influence, loyalties and the implications those have for its development.

11. Who provides the resources?

What is its most neglected resource?

12. How does it survive?

This uncovers what keeps it in 'business': profits, subscriptions, endowments.

13. Where do the major threats lie – including complacency?

This also includes discovering where its strongest support comes from and exploring whether it is going to remain that way.

6: The First Stages of Organisation

<p>Stage One: Enthusiastic Pioneering</p>	<p>Enthusiasm Uncertainty Informality Networking Role overlap</p>	<p>Hostility Hesitancy Low levels of coherence Unpredictability Faltering connections</p>
<p>Stage Two: Activity: First Signs of Routine</p>	<p>Role clarity Working to plans 'Politics' plays a part Caution and calculation</p>	<p>Less radical/threatening Measures/assessments Over-structured Alliances/deals</p>
<p>Stage Three: Organising</p>	<p>Direction Vision Strategy Management</p>	<p>Wouldn't it be nice...? Done that We might have to change More to manage</p>

Table 1: The First Stages of Organisation

Stage three is a threshold: *organisation* rather than *organising* becomes a real possibility and a real challenge. It means accepting an identity rather than redefining the activity as it suits. It means counting for some things rather than others – quality of service, growth of organisation, focus on internal values – priorities have to be adopted.

There is more to manage and it takes more time.

Work well done at this stage lays a solid foundation for the future. Avoided it may mean the project continues for a long time, but the momentum will not take off. This is often a time when some people leave because of the new demands and the increasing acceptance of organisational understanding that is required. Solo players often feel rebellious; innovation of a different kind and for a time is required.

7: Organisational Portrait

Think of the organisation as a person and build up a character portrait. Here are some of the headings that may help.

- Name
- Age
- Sex
- Position in the family
- Physical build and appearance
- Parentage
- Family background
- Family expectations
- Hobbies
- Friends
- Economic circumstances
- Schooldays
- Early experiences
- Who do they admire?
- Who do they want to be?
- What qualities have they developed?
- What do they need to develop?
- Character traits/faults
- Best worst features
- What kind of landscape are they living through?
- Who do they meet?
- What challenges have they had to overcome?
- What are their triumphs and struggles?
- What are they hoping for next?
- What are they afraid might become of them?